

structure and to the family residing within it. Dar also refers to a genealogically related group who normally resided close to one another; for example, dar el Shu'aibi refers to the whole clan of Shu'aibi.

The house was considered the private domain of the nuclear family, but more specifically the women's private domain. The house was the women's space par excellence, as opposed to the 'allieh (elevated room) and the guest-house, both exemplifying the male domain. The dark and closed interior of the house contrasted strongly with the bright, elevated spaces of men. This is expected in a culture where family life and privacy were so highly valued. Hurmah literally means sacred or holy, but it also means a woman or a wife. The expression Hurmat el beit refers to the house as being inviolable. The house, which was the world of women and the world of intimacy, was illicit for every man who did not form part of the mahram (persons not eligible by law as spouses). Only those that had entered into marriage relations with the family were allowed to enter. Males were normally restricted and discouraged from visiting other people's houses. Male guests, including relatives and friends, were either entertained in the village guest-house or in the clan's 'allieh. However, there were no restrictions on female visitors, who were normally either neighbours (who in most cases were by definition relatives) or the relatives of the wife.

"The man is the cropper janna (i.e. bread winner) and the woman is the builder" banna (er-rejjal janna wil marah banna) is a revealing common saying referring to a clear division of labour as well as a clear demarcation of men's and women's domains. While the man spent his time working in the fields, the woman took care of the house; hence she is described as a "builder", a reference to her role in managing the house affairs.

Although the Shu'aibi women were highly influenced by the laws of seclusion and the strictness with which the women of the Barghouthis were guarded, they, like most of the fallaheen women, moved about freely. While men left the houses at sunrise for the fields, women spent most of their day in and around the house cleaning, tidying,